

Healthier drinks

The best drinks between meals are milk and water as these do not harm teeth. Drinks that contain sugar (e.g. fruit squash, flavoured milk, fruit juice, carbonated drinks) are best kept to mealtimes. Regular visits to the dentist and brushing teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste will help keep children's teeth healthy.

Healthier snacks

Snack foods, such as cakes, biscuits, crisps, chocolate and sweets, can be high in fat and/or sugar and should make up a relatively small part of the diet. Snacks should complement other meals, so select healthier options by thinking about the foods that your children eat at mealtimes.

Ideas for healthier snacks for children

- Fruit (e.g. bananas, grapes, strawberries)
- Vegetables (e.g. baby carrots, cherry tomatoes)
- Yogurt or fromage frais
- Cheese and crackers
- Sandwiches, chapattis or pitta bread filled with low-fat cheese and tomato, hummus and grated carrot, tuna and cucumber, chicken or turkey and salad
- Toasted muffin or crumpet

Do children need a vitamin supplement?

A varied and balanced diet will provide all the vitamins and minerals that children need. However, a daily supplement of vitamins A, C and D should be given to all children until they are 5 years old.

Encouraging physical activity

Being physically active will help children to stay healthy and fit. Encourage them to participate in a wide variety of activities such as cycling, skateboarding, walking, swimming and dancing.

For more information on diet, nutrition and health, contact us at British Nutrition Foundation

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Healthy Eating for School-aged Children:

A Guide for Parents

The importance of a healthy and varied diet

Healthy eating is important for everyone, especially children, to ensure that they receive all the nutrients they need to grow and develop. Eating well and being physically active will improve your children's health as well as their ability to learn and achieve at school. Encouraging your children to eat healthily now will make them more likely to adopt a healthy lifestyle as they get older.





What does healthy eating mean in practice?

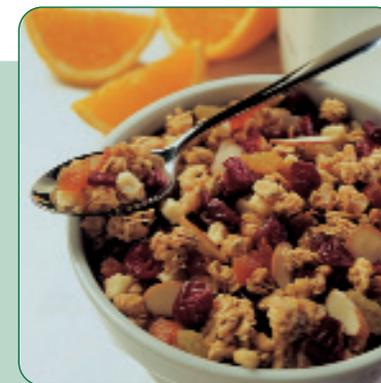
In practice, eating healthily means encouraging you children to:

- **Enjoy their food** – this will establish positive lifelong attitudes towards eating. Getting children involved in shopping and cooking and making mealtimes fun can develop their interest in food and healthy eating.
- **Eat a balanced diet consisting of a mixture of different foods** – foods contain different nutrients so children eating a varied diet are more likely to be getting all the nutrients they need.
- **Eat plenty of starchy foods** – such as breads, cereals, pasta, rice, potatoes, couscous and plantains. These should be the main sources of energy for children making up about a third of their diet. Try to provide at least one starchy food at every meal.
- **Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables** – five or more servings a day are recommended for good health. For children, one serving is roughly the amount that fits into the palm of their hand. Raw, fresh, dried, canned and frozen all count.
- **Eat moderate amounts of meat, fish and alternatives such as beans, lentils, nuts or soya products** – provide at least one portion with each meal.
- **Eat moderate amounts of milk and dairy products** – lower fat versions (e.g. of cheese, milk and yogurt) contain as much calcium and are often a good choice.
- **Not eat too many foods that contain a lot of fat** – such as fried foods, pastries, pies, crisps, biscuits, chocolate, butter and other spreads, oil and mayonnaise. Look for lower fat options and opt for baking or grilling rather than frying.
- **Not eat snacks or drinks that contain a lot of sugar too often** – as this can damage teeth and may fill children up so they are not hungry at mealtimes.
- **Cut back on salt** – there is no need to add salt to children's food. Check the labels if you are buying processed foods and choose those with less salt (sodium).

The need for a healthy breakfast

Breakfast is important to top up children's energy stores for the morning's activities. Children who eat a healthy breakfast are less likely to snack on foods that are high in fat and/or sugar later on and tend to concentrate and perform better at school.

Breakfast tips



- Choose wholegrain versions of starchy foods such as wholemeal or granary bread or wholegrain cereals (e.g. porridge, wheat biscuits) as these contain more fibre and nutrients and provide a slow release of energy throughout the morning to keep children fuller for longer.
- Look for breakfast cereals that are fortified with nutrients such as B vitamins, vitamin D and iron if you want to boost children's intake.
- Check the labels to select breakfast cereals that contain less salt and sugar.
- Add a glass of fruit juice because vitamin C from the juice will help iron absorption from the cereal or bread. Iron is an important nutrient for growth and development and is often in short supply in children's diets.
- Include foods such as milk and dairy products (e.g. yogurt, fromage frais) as these contain calcium which is important for healthy bones and teeth.
- Add fresh and dried fruit to breakfast cereals to provide sweetness, rather than sugar.
- Always include a drink (e.g. milk, water, fruit juice) to ensure that children start the day well hydrated.
- You could offer smoothies made with fresh or canned fruit, fruit juice and low fat milk or yogurt.
- Provide fresh fruit, cartons of fruit juice or fortified breakfast cereal bars for children who want breakfast 'on the go'.